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Virdimura

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Virdimura (fl. 1376) was a Sicilian Jewish doctor, the first woman officially certified to practice medicine in Sicily.[1]

Biography [edit source]

Though few biographical details of Virdimura are known, she was a Jewish woman living in Catania, Sicily, in the 14th century.[2][3]

She was trained in the practice of Jewish medicine, perhaps by her husband, Pasquale de Medico of Catania, who was also thought to be a physician.[2][3][4][5][6]

She obtained a royal license to practice medicine across the island of Sicily on November 7, 1376, with the approval of the doctors of King Frederick's royal court.[7][8] Virdimura was asked to complete exams for the certification.[6] Her patients also testified on her behalf, and the licensing documentation notes that the examiners took into consideration the "praise universally given her."[9][10]

With this, she became the first woman physician with this designation on the island. She subsequently traveled throughout Sicily treating patients.[2]

Virdimura particularly focused on treating poor and disabled patients, charging them less for her services than her male contemporaries.[2][4] This also likely meant that she treated both female and male patients, and both Jews and gentiles.[6][11]

Legacy [edit source]

The International Virdimura Award, which recognizes doctors with a humanitarian mission, is named for her.[1]

A square in Catania, in the San Giovanni Galermo [it] district, was also named in her honor in 2020.[12]

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Categories: 14th-century Italian physicians | 14th-century Italian Jews | Physicians from Sicily | People from Catania | Medieval women physicians | Jewish physicians

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